Speak Business English Like an American

LEARN THE IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS YOU NEED TO SUCCEED ON THE JOB!

Deluxe Book & CD Set

Amy Gillett

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INTRODUCTION

For better or worse, the American workplace is full of idioms. People don't begin a project. They **get a project off the ground**. They don't call each other to discuss progress. They **touch base**. Later, if the project is not going well, they don't end it. They **pull the plug**.

Speak Business English Like An American covers over 350 idioms and expressions you're likely to encounter in today's business world. Familiarize yourself with all of them. When they come up in conversation, you'll be prepared to respond confidently instead of becoming silent while thinking to yourself, What's he talking about? Sales went **through the roof**? What roof? As you're asking yourself these questions, the conversation is continuing without you. Suddenly you're left behind. Before you know it, you're **out of the loop**.

After getting to know the idioms, listen for them in everyday conversations and look for them in newspapers. Idioms are everywhere. Newspapers like the *Wall Street Journal* and business sections of daily newspapers are full of these idioms. Once you get a good feel for them, try them out on your colleagues and friends. Idioms will add color and excitement to your language. Using idioms will make you sound more like a native speaker.

Let's take just one example. Let's say you're losing a lot of business to your competition. You could say, "We're losing business to our competition." Or, you could say, "Our competition is **eating our lunch**!" The second sentence sounds a little more lively, doesn't it?

Don't feel the need to load every sentence with idioms. A well-placed idiom here and there will **do the trick**.

You don't have to add every idiom in this book to your active vocabulary. You'll naturally find some more useful than others. A few of the idioms in this book — such as **think outside the box** and **on the same page** — have become so common, they're now overused. But even if you don't want to use them, you should understand them since you're likely to hear them.

American English idioms come from many different sources. The business-focused idioms often originate from military speak (example: **rally the troops**) and from the world of sports (example: **step up to the plate**). This provides some insight into the way Americans think about business: like war, it's a bitter competition with winners and losers. Like sports, it's a game, with the prizes going to those teams (companies) with superior strategy and execution.

For your convenience, all of the idioms in this book are shown in bold and listed in the *Index*. In the *Glossary of Terms*, we've included definitions for many other words and phrases that you may not understand. These terms are in italics in the dialogues. Whenever you see an italicized word you don't know, just turn to the back of the book to look it up.

This book comes with a CD featuring all of the dialogues. The CD will help you master the rhythm and stress of American English speech. It will also help you remember the idioms. Play it at home, at work, in the car, while on business trips...before you know it, you'll be speaking English like a native!

Good luck adding idioms to your everyday speech. It's fun and it'll help you succeed in the working world!

Lesson 1

TALKING ABOUT A NEW PROJECT

Carl, Greg, and Anne work for WaterSonic Corporation. Recently, the company has come up with an idea for a new electric toothbrush.

Carl: I think we've **come up with a winner.**

Anne: I agree. The new Brush-o-matic toothbrush should be a **blockbuster**!

Carl: Our designers have already made up some *prototypes.** The toothbrushes have a tooth-whitening attachment and many other **bells and whistles.**

Greg: We should **fast track this project**. Let's try to *launch* it in time for the holiday season.

Anne: This will be a great **stocking stuffer**!

Carl: We definitely need a **big win** for the holidays.

Anne: This is a great idea. We're going to **make a killing.**

Greg: Let's not talk about this project to anybody who doesn't need to know. We'll **keep it under wraps.**

Carl: I agree. **Mum's the word**. We don't want any of our competitors to **get wind of** the idea and **rip it off**!

Anne: Right. Let's meet again on Monday morning and discuss our **game plan** for **getting this project off the ground**!

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 1

(to) come up with a winner
to think up a very good idea

EXAMPLE: Everybody likes Pepsi's new advertising campaign. Their advertising agency has **come up with a winner**.

blockbuster
a big success; a huge hit

EXAMPLE: Eli Lilly made a lot of money with the prescription drug, Prozac. It was a real **blockbuster**.

ORIGIN: This term comes from the "blockbuster" bombs used during World War Two by the British Royal Air Force. They were huge and created an explosive force. Blockbuster ideas similarly create a big impact — and hopefully don't cause destruction like blockbuster bombs!

bells and whistles
extra product features, usually using the latest technologies; product features which are attractive, but not essential for the product to function

EXAMPLE: Our office just got a new copier with all the **bells and whistles**. I'll probably never learn how to use all of its features!

(to) fast track a project
to make a project a high priority; to speed up the time frame of a project

EXAMPLE: Let's **fast track this project**. We've heard rumors that our competitors are developing similar products.

stocking stuffer
a small gift given at Christmas time

EXAMPLE: These new mini travel pillows will make great **stocking stuffers**!

NOTE: This expression comes from the practice of kids hanging up

big win
a huge success; a successful product

EXAMPLE: The drug company spent millions on research and development, hoping that one of their new products would be a **big win.**

(to) make a killing
to make a lot of money

EXAMPLE: Suzanne **made a killing** on her Google stock and retired at 40.

SYNONYM: to make a fortune

(to) keep something under wraps
to keep something secret; to not let anybody know about a new project or plan

EXAMPLE: I'm sorry I can't tell you anything about the project I'm working on. My boss told me to **keep it under wraps.**

NOTE: "Wraps" are things that provide cover, so if something is "under wraps" it's covered up and hidden.

mum's the word
let's keep quiet about this; I agree not to tell anyone about this

EXAMPLE: Please don't tell anybody about our new project. Remember: **mum's the word**!

ORIGIN: The word "mum" comes from the murmur "mmmmm," the only sound you can make when your mouth is shut firmly. Try making other sounds besides "mmmmm" with your lips and mouth shut firmly, and you will see that it's impossible!

(to) get wind of
to find out about something, often sensitive information

EXAMPLE: When the restaurant owner **got wind of** the fact that one of his waiters was stealing money from the cash register, he was furious.

(to) rip off
to copy an idea; to steal

EXAMPLE: Why doesn't the Donox Company ever think up any original ideas? All they ever do is **rip off** their competitors!

NOTE: "Rip off" is also a noun. Example: We were charged $10,000 for a small advertisement in the newspaper. What a **rip off**!

game plan
an action plan; a plan for how a project will proceed

EXAMPLE: The software company's **game plan** is to expand its operations into China and India over the next year.

ORIGIN: In football, a "game plan" is a strategy for winning.

(to) get something off the ground
to get started on something, often a project

EXAMPLE: We've been sitting around talking about this project for months. It's time to take action and **get it off the ground**!

✍ PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

1) Did the company think of this new product idea themselves? **No, they ripped it off from an inventor.**
   a) No, they paid an inventor for the idea.
   b) No, they stole the idea from an inventor.
   c) No, they discussed it with an inventor and he agreed to sell it to them.

2) Jill is planning to quit her job at the end of September, but **mum's the word.**
   a) don't tell anybody
   b) don't tell her mother

3) Sony has **made a killing on** its popular PlayStation line.
   a) lost money on
   b) made a lot of money on
   c) decided to stop producing

4) After receiving a large loan from the bank, the company was finally able to **get its project off the ground.**
   a) get started on the project
   b) cancel the project
   c) borrow money

5) That new software company seems very disorganized. Do they have a **game plan**?
   a) a plan for closing down their business
   b) a plan for developing new games
   c) a plan for how they will proceed to grow their business

6) Some experts recommend that when you're interviewing for a new job, you **keep your current salary under wraps.**
   a) you should tell the interviewer what your current salary is
   b) you should say you're making twice as much as you're really earning
   c) you should not say how much you're currently earning

7) Don's new cell phone has a video camera and all sorts of other **bells and whistles.**
   a) fancy features
   b) things that make loud ringing noises and whistle tones
   c) features typical in a low-priced product

8) When investors **got wind of** the fact that the pharmaceutical company's major drug increased the risk of heart attacks, the company's stock price fell.
   a) hid
   b) discovered
   c) got fed up over

ANSWERS TO LESSON 1, p. 190

I did some back-of-the-envelope calculations.

Lesson 2

TALKING ABOUT FINANCIAL ISSUES

Juan and Diane work in the finance department of Delicious Delights, a company that makes snack foods. Here, they're discussing the financial projections for a new product line.

Juan: I'm really excited about the *launch* of our new line of fat-free Delicious Delight donuts.

Diane: Me too. But before we go any further, we'd better make sure this *product line* is going to be profitable.

Juan: I did some **back-of-the-envelope calculations**. Take a look.

Diane: I see you've estimated $2 million for the new equipment. Where did you get that *figure*?

Juan: That's an **educated guess** based on some equipment I bought last year.

Diane: You're going to need to *double-check* that. Using old estimates can get us **in hot water**.

Juan: No problem. I'll get on the phone with the manufacturer in Dallas and get a *price quote*.

Diane: Do you have a sense for *market demand?* We should get the *forecasts* from the marketing department before we **crunch the numbers**.

in hot water
in trouble

EXAMPLE: Ian was **in hot water** with the government after he was caught making illegal copies of software.

(to) crunch the numbers
to perform financial calculations

EXAMPLE: Reed Corporation is thinking about buying a small company. First, they'll need to **crunch the numbers** and see if their acquisition will be profitable.

NOTE: You will also see the noun form of this expression, "number cruncher," used to describe somebody who makes a lot of financial calculations as part of his or her job.

(it or that) blows my mind
it bothers me; it really surprises me; it amazes me

EXAMPLE: **It blows my mind that** our company is trying to save money by taking away our free coffee service.

(to) run (the) numbers
to perform financial calculations

EXAMPLE: Should we lease or buy the equipment? We'll need to **run the numbers** to help us make the decision.

in the red
losing money; when expenses are greater than revenues

EXAMPLE: We need to do something to start making profits. If we're **in the red** for one more quarter, we're going to go out of business.

NOTE: This expression comes from the accounting practice of marking debits (subtractions to the account) in red and credits (additions to the account) in black. The opposite of "in the red" is "in the black," meaning profitable.

one's head is on the chopping block
in a position where one is likely to be fired or get in trouble

EXAMPLE: After Earthy Foods released a frozen dinner that made many consumers sick, their CEO's **head was on the chopping block**.

NOTE: A chopping block is a piece of wood on which food or wood is chopped. Having your head on the block would suggest that it is going to be cut off. Fortunately, the meaning here is not literal. If your head is on the chopping block, you might lose your job, but at least you'll still have your head!

(to) give somebody the green light
to give permission to move forward with a project

EXAMPLE: Super Software's Moscow office has developed its own regional advertising campaign. They hope that headquarters in California will **give them the green light** to proceed with the campaign.

(to) break even
to make neither a profit or a loss; the point at which revenues equal costs

EXAMPLE: You **broke even** during your first year in business? That's good since most companies lose money during their first year.

(to) pull the plug
to put a stop to a project or initiative, usually because it's not going well; to stop something from moving forward; to discontinue

EXAMPLE: After losing millions of dollars drilling for oil in Nebraska and finding nothing, the oil company finally **pulled the plug** on its exploration project.

ORIGIN: This expression refers to removing a plug to make something stop working — when you pull the plug out of the wall, your appliance doesn't work. In the 19th century, when this term originated, the plug was for a toilet. To flush the toilet, you had to pull out a plug

✍ Practice the Idioms

Choose the most appropriate response to each sentence:

1) Did our CEO give the green light for the new project yet?
   a) No, he told us he needed more information before making a decision.
   b) Yes, he told us that the project was a bad idea and that we should stop working on it.
   c) Yes, he's going to discuss the project with his wife and see what she thinks.

2) Last year, our company made a loss on our new line of video games, but this year we'll break even.
   a) I'm sorry to hear you're broke.
   b) That's great. At least you're making progress.
   c) Too bad. Last year you did a lot better.

3) If you don't double check those numbers and make sure they're correct, you might get in hot water with your boss.
   a) You're right. My boss always appreciates it when I give him the wrong numbers.
   b) That would be great. My boss enjoys soaking in hot water.
   c) You're right. My boss always gets angry when he finds mistakes.

4) Our company is in the red again this quarter.
   a) Congratulations! When's the celebration party?
   b) In the red again? I hope you don't go out of business!
   c) In the red? That's okay. It's better than being in the black.

5) We should pull the plug on our online advertising campaign.
   a) I agree. It's not bringing us any new business.
   b) I agree. Let's double our spending on it.
   c) I disagree. I think we should stop spending money on online advertising.

Andy: We need to become much more *innovative* as a company. Instead of producing **me-too products**, we need to **leapfrog our competitors**.

Laura: How do we do that?

Andy: **For starters**, we need to **beef up** our *R&D* department. We need to develop *differentiated products* which we can sell **at a premium**.

Laura: As a next step, let's **get buy-in** from our marketing and sales directors.

Andy: Right. We should get everyone **on the same page**.

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 5

fast followers
a company that doesn't come up with new ideas or concepts first, but rather quickly copies those of other companies

EXAMPLE: Taiwanese PC manufacturers don't spend much on R&D. They are **fast followers**, waiting for foreign competitors to innovate and then quickly copying their products.

cutting-edge
very modern; using the latest technologies

EXAMPLE: Sony focuses on innovation and is known for its **cutting-edge** electronic goods.

Why mess with success?
Why start doing things differently when the way we're doing them now has been working?

EXAMPLE: We could move our manufacturing plant to China, but we're doing very well manufacturing in the United States. **Why mess with success?**

(to) get with the program
to pay attention to what's going on right now; to be alert to what's happening now

EXAMPLE: **Get with the program**. Our competitors have all started to outsource their call centers to India to save money, while we're still paying a fortune here in the United States!

cash cow
a product, service or business division that generates a lot of cash for the company, without requiring much investment

EXAMPLE: With strong sales every year and a great brand name, Mercedes is a **cash cow** for DaimlerChrysler.

real dog
a bad product; a commercial failure

EXAMPLE: In 1985, the Coca-Cola Company released New Coke. It was a **real dog** and was in stores for only a few months.

me-too products
products that are extremely similar to another company's products; copies

EXAMPLE: Procter & Gamble is a company famous for innovation. They rarely produce **me-too products**.

(to) leapfrog one's competitors
to make a product that is technologically superior to competitors' products

EXAMPLE: Logitech introduced a product that **leapfrogged its competitors**: a mouse that was both wireless and *ergonomic*.

NOTE: Leapfrog is a popular children's game in which one child bends down and another jumps over him or her.

for starters
as a first step; to begin with

EXAMPLE: You want to do business in Russia? **For starters**, I'd

(to) beef up
to improve; to add to

EXAMPLE: Leave plenty of extra time at the airport. Ever since they **beefed up** security, it takes a long time to get through the lines.

at a premium
at a high price; at a relatively high price

EXAMPLE: When flat-screen televisions first came out, they were selling **at a premium.**

(to) get buy-in (from)
to get agreement or approval from

EXAMPLE: To be an effective leader, you need to **get buy-in** for your decisions from employees throughout the organization.

(to be) on the same page
to be in agreement; when everybody has the latest information on what's going on

EXAMPLE: Before we start on the next phase of this project, let's have a meeting and make sure everybody's **on the same page.**

NOTE: This expression is overused. You will likely hear it, but you may not want to use it.

PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

1) Mattel, a large toy company, always **beefs up** its advertising around the holiday season.
   a) changes
   b) increases
   c) decreases

2) Amazon.com uses **cutting-edge** technologies to determine which products each of its customers is most likely to buy.
   a) sharp
   b) inexpensive

3) We need to re-design our entire store. **For starters**, we should move the cash register from the back of the store to the front of the store.
   a) for now
   b) as a first priority
   c) for people who can't find the cash register now

4) Your company is introducing garlic fruitcake? **That sounds like a real dog!**
   a) What a great idea!
   b) That sounds like a terrible idea!
   c) I'm sure dogs will love it!

5) After Apple's iPod proved to be successful, several other manufacturers came out with **me-too products**.
   a) products very similar to the iPod
   b) their own innovative products
   c) products very different from the iPod

6) Your plan is good, but before you proceed, you'll need to **get buy-in** from the company president.
   a) get a purchase order
   b) get approval
   c) get a promotion

7) With our new solar-powered automobile, we're going to **leap-frog our competitors**.
   a) make all our competition disappear
   b) turn our competitors into small green animals
   c) come out with a superior product

8) You don't own a cell phone? I thought everybody had one. You need **to get with the program**!
   a) get a program to teach you how to use the phone
   b) join a cell phone calling plan that offers unlimited minutes
   c) get a cell phone too so you're not missing what everybody else has

REVIEW FOR LESSONS 1-5

Fill in the blank with the missing word:

1) Steve won't be satisfied with a simple digital camera. He wants one with all the _____ and whistles.

   a) widgets b) bells c) chimes

2) I know you're planning on spending your entire advertising budget on TV advertising. _____ for the record, I don't think that's a good idea.

   a) just b) only c) simply

3) HBO _____ up with a winner with its popular show *Sex and the City*. It became an international hit.

   a) came b) thought c) arrived

4) Jack didn't want to buy laptops for everybody in the office, but the office manager succeeded in twisting his _____.

   a) leg b) mind c) arm

5) After two years on the market, this product is still not selling well. I think we should _____ the plug.

   a) push b) remove c) pull

6) Our president has made it very clear that we need to double our revenues this year. No _____, ands, or buts.

   a) ifs b) howevers c) maybes

7) We don't have any job openings right now, but please _____ base with us in a couple of months.

8) Irene would like to start a business from her home, but she's not sure how to go _____ it.

a) around b) about c) with

9) Some of your colleagues might not like you, but at the _____ of the day, what really matters is what your boss thinks of you.

a) end b) close c) finish

10) When it was clear that the new product was a failure, nobody was willing to step up to the _____ and take responsibility.

a) table b) plate c) dish

11) Holiday time is very busy at the department store, so the store is planning on beefing _____ its sales staff for the entire month of December.

a) out b) over c) up

12) Charlie loves his job, so when he won the employee of the year award, it was just _____ on the cake.

a) frosting b) icing c) candles

13) Don't tell Tony we're planning a retirement party for him. It's going to be a surprise. _____ the word!

a) Sister's b) Dad's c) Mum's

14) After another bad quarter, the president's head was on the _____.

a) cutting board b) chopping block c) operating table

15) General Electric is thinking about selling off one of its businesses in India, but nothing is set in _____ yet.

a) stone b) rock c) paper

ANSWERS TO REVIEW, p. 191

Kudos to Linda!

Lesson 6

DISCUSSING GOOD RESULTS

Peter, Linda, and Todd work as managers at Capital City Bank, a retail bank. Linda's creative idea for attracting new customers to the bank has generated lots of new business.

Peter: Great news! We had a **record-breaking** quarter. We brought in revenues of $500,000.

Linda: Wow, revenues really were **through the roof!**

Todd: That's great. **Kudos to** Linda! She deserves a **pat on the back**. The **guerrilla marketing** campaign she **dreamed up** was brilliant. She sent out e-mail to all of our customers asking them to e-mail a friend about our services. For each friend they e-mailed, they received a free gift.

Peter: Linda, your campaign helped us **drum up a lot of business.** We **signed on 800 new customers.**

Linda: I'm really glad my plan **panned out.** I thought it would, since everybody loves a *freebie!*

Todd: Linda, we can always count on you to **think outside the box.**

Linda: **For the record,** Peter helped me come up with the idea.

Peter: Thanks for **sharing the credit,** Linda. But it was your idea.

Todd: The important thing is that we're now giving our biggest

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 6

record-breaking
better than ever before; exceeding all previous results

EXAMPLE: After another **record-breaking** quarter, eBay's stock price hit a new high.

though the roof
very high; higher than expected

EXAMPLE: No wonder people are complaining about the cost of heating their homes. Oil prices have gone **through the roof**!

kudos to
I'd like to give credit to; I'd like to acknowledge

EXAMPLE: **Kudos to** our R&D department. They've come up with a new shampoo formula that's cheaper to manufacture and more effective on damaged hair.

NOTE: Kudos is the Greek word for "praise."

a pat on the back
credit; recognition; praise

EXAMPLE: "Team, give yourselves **a pat on the back**. Our results are in, and we just had our most successful quarter ever!"

guerrilla marketing
innovative methods to sell products; non-traditional methods of advertising or promotion that deliver good results with minimal spending

EXAMPLE: To promote his new Internet dating service, Don painted his car pink and wrote "Don's Dating Service" in big letters on both sides of the car. That's effective **guerrilla marketing**!

NOTE: The word "guerrilla" refers to carrying on a war using independent bands of soldiers, who tend to use very aggressive and non-traditional tactics to win battles.

(to) dream up
to think up something creative or unusual; to come up with an original idea; to invent

EXAMPLE: A disposable lemon-scented toilet brush? What will companies **dream up** next?

(to) drum up business
to create business; to find new customers

EXAMPLE: Sales have been very slow lately. Do you have any ideas for **drumming up business**?

(to) sign on new customers (or members)
to enlist new customers; to get customers to open an account or take a membership

EXAMPLE: The fitness center was able to **sign on 300 new members** in May thanks to their successful advertising campaign.

(to) pan out
to succeed; to bring the desired results

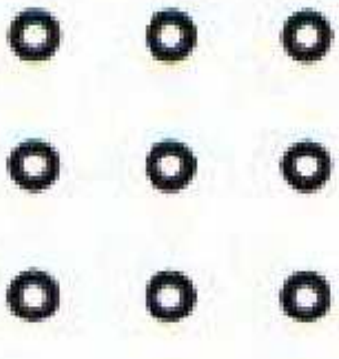
EXAMPLE: When Steve's career in acting didn't **pan out**, he decided to go to business school.

(to) think outside the box
to think creatively; to think in a new and different way

EXAMPLE: The small law firm is losing business to larger rivals. The firm needs to **think outside the box** and come up with some creative ways to market its services.

NOTE: This expression is now overused. You will likely hear it, but you may not want to use it.

ORIGIN: This phrase refers to a puzzle used by consultants in the 1970s and 1980s. To solve it, you must connect nine dots, using four straight lines drawn continuously. Your pen must never leave the paper. (The only solution to this puzzle is to draw lines outside the border of the box. Therefore, you must "think outside



for the record
see Lesson 4

(to) share the credit
to acknowledge someone else's contribution; to share with somebody else recognition for a job well done

EXAMPLE: Thank you for giving me the award for coming up with the best new product idea this year. But I really need to **share the credit** with my colleagues in the marketing department.

(a) run for one's money
strong competition

EXAMPLE: When Yahoo decided to go into the online search business, they gave Google a **run for their money**.

ORIGIN: This term comes from horse racing. The idea is that one enjoys watching the horse race even if one doesn't win money.

PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Choose the most appropriate response to each sentence:

1) Our store had a very successful holiday season this year. Sales were through the roof!
   a) I'm sorry to hear that you need a new roof.
   b) That's great. Congratulations!
   c) Don't worry. Maybe next year will be better.

2) We're looking for some fresh thinking in our marketing department. Are you good at thinking outside the box?
   a) Yes, I tend to think like everybody else.
   b) Yes, I enjoy approaching new projects in a traditional way.
   c) Yes, I'm great at coming up with new and creative ideas.

3) I'd like to share the credit with you. Without you, I wouldn't have been able to find this important new client.
   a) Thank you. I appreciate the recognition.
   b) Thanks, but I already have enough credit.
   c) I think I deserve some of the credit too.

4) A big Ace Hardware store is opening up in town. Do you think they'll give our local hardware store a run for their money?
   a) Definitely. Their selection will be bigger and their prices may be lower.
   b) Yes, our local hardware store will definitely run out of money.
   c) No. Everybody in town will start shopping at Ace Hardware.

5) Since you need to drum up some new business, I suggest you exhibit at a trade show.
   a) We don't have any business right now.
   b) We've been thinking about going into the drum business.
   c) Great idea! I'm sure we could find some new clients there.

6) You deserve a pat on the back for figuring out how to fix our computer network.
   a) Thanks. It was my pleasure.
   b) Thanks. Let me turn around so you can see my back.
   c) Sorry. I wish I could've done a better job.

7) Kudos to you and the rest of the manufacturing department for figuring out how to cut our production costs!
   a) We don't need any more kudos. We have enough in inventory.
   b) Thank you. We are proud of our results.
   c) We'll try our best, but we can't guarantee anything.

8) Traditional ways of advertising are no longer working for our firm. Do you think we should try some guerrilla marketing?
   a) Absolutely. It's always better to use reliable old methods.
   b) Yes, new ways of marketing might help increase sales.
   c) No, I think you should try marketing to monkeys instead.

We're in deep trouble. Sales are down by 50%.

Lesson 7

DISCUSSING BAD RESULTS

Ron, Alex, and Pam work for Brooklyn Brewski, a company that brews and distributes beer throughout New York. The company's recent results have been terrible.

Alex: We need to **face the music** here. We're **in deep trouble!** Sales are down by 50% versus last year.

Pam: It looks like we're going to be **in the red** for the year **to the tune of** $1 million.

Ron: **No wonder.** We're losing **market share** to Manhattan Beer.

Alex: Why? We need to **get to the bottom of** this!

Pam: Every year they come up with new beers. They're really **on top of trends.** For instance, last year they released a *low-carb* beer.

Ron: **No wonder** they're **eating our lunch!** They're **cashing in on** the latest trends and **bringing great new products to market.**

Pam: Meanwhile, we're **running in place.** We need a new *product line* and new ideas for marketing.

Alex: It's time to **clean house** and bring some **new blood** into this company.

Ron: **You took the words right out of my mouth!** We need some

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 7

(to) face the music
to admit that there's a problem; to deal with an unpleasant situation realistically

EXAMPLE: Enron executives finally had to **face the music** and admit that they were involved in some illegal activities.

in deep trouble
having a serious problem; in crisis

EXAMPLE: If there's another winter without any snowfall, Craig's snow plowing business is going to be **in deep trouble**.

in the red
see Lesson 2

to the tune of (followed by a number)
in the amount of; approximately

EXAMPLE: This year, our Beijing office will bring in revenues **to the tune of** two million dollars.

no wonder
it's not surprising that

EXAMPLE: **No wonder** Randy hasn't been promoted in 10 years. He just sits in his office surfing the Internet all day.

market share – the percentage of sales a company has in relation to its competitors for a product or product line

EXAMPLE: We're in trouble. Our **market share** went from 50% last year to only 20% this year!

NOTE: Here are the verbs most frequently associated with the phrase market share:

(to) gain market share – to increase one's share of the market. Example: With the launch of their popular new herbal toothpaste, Colgate **gained market share**

(to) lose market share – to decrease one's share of the market. Example: Last year, Internet Explorer **lost market share** to one of its rivals, Mozilla.

(to) steal market share (from) – to take sales away from a competitor. Example: Motorola and Samsung are trying to **steal market share from** Nokia.

(to) get to the bottom of something
to figure out what's going on; to find out what's causing a problem

EXAMPLE: When hundreds of people had heart attacks after taking Zylestra's new prescription drug, the Federal Drug Administration promised to **get to the bottom of** it.

on top of trends
modern; aware and responding to the latest tastes

EXAMPLE: The Gap is **on top of trends.** They always have the latest styles in their stores.

eating one's lunch
taking away one's business

EXAMPLE: Ever since Wal-Mart came into town, our local stores have been doing poorly. Wal-Mart is **eating their lunch.**

(to) cash in on
to make money on; to benefit financially from

EXAMPLE: Jamie Oliver, star of the TV show *The Naked Chef*, **cashed in on** his popularity by writing cookbooks and opening restaurants.

(to) bring a product to market
to introduce or launch a new product

EXAMPLE: Next year will be very busy for Procter & Gamble's Oil of Olay division. They're going to **bring many new products to market.**

(to) run in place
to not make any progress; to be stuck; to remain in the same place for a long period of time

EXAMPLE: Our company needs to come up with some innovative new products. We've been **running in place** for years.

(to) clean house
to fire a lot of employees

EXAMPLE: The airline was nearly bankrupt. They had no choice but to **clean house**.

new blood
new employees

EXAMPLE: When the biotech company brought some **new blood** into their R&D department, their business really started to improve.

You took the words right out of my mouth!
I completely agree with you; I was just going to say that

EXAMPLE: "I hope the boss doesn't hold our holiday party at his house again this year." — "**You took the words right out of my mouth!** I'd much rather go to a restaurant."

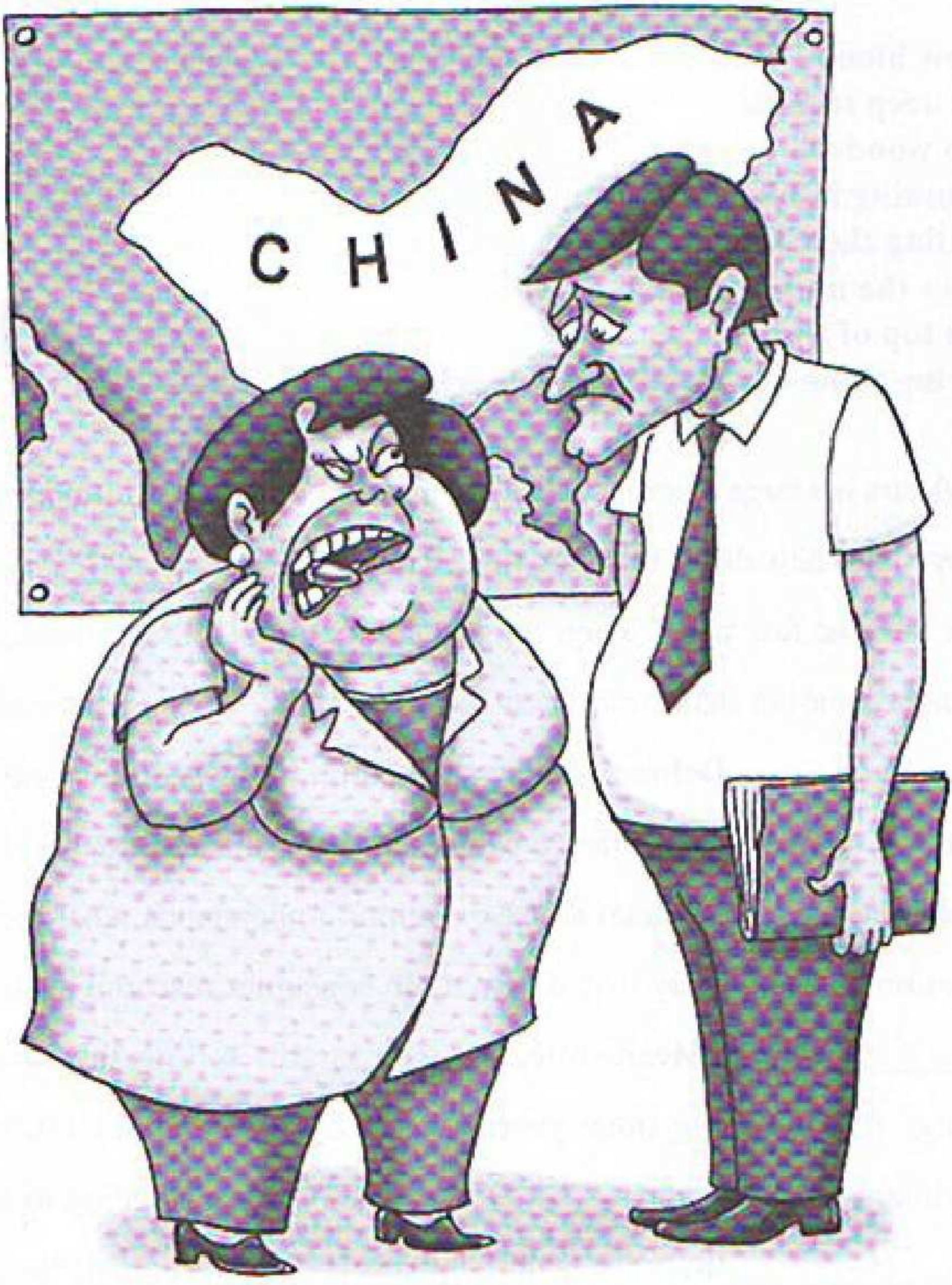
✍ Practice the Idioms

Fill in the blanks using the following idioms:

new blood
in deep trouble
no wonder
running in place
eating their lunch
face the music
on top of trends
bring some new products to market

Zylestra is a large pharmaceutical company. They haven't introduced any major new drugs in a long time. They've been _____(1)_____ for the past few years. Their biggest competitor, Delmar Drugs, is stealing market share from them and is _____(2)_____. It's really _____(3)_____ Delmar is more successful. In the past few years, they've come out with effective drugs for lowering cholesterol and reducing the risk of heart disease. Delmar understands what their customers want. They invest heavily in consumer research to stay _____(4)_____. Meanwhile, Zylestra is still selling the same drugs it was selling three years ago. If Zylestra doesn't follow Delmar's example and _____(5)_____ soon, they're going to be _____(6)_____. Investors in the company hope that Richard Pierce, Zylestra's CEO, will _____(7)_____ and take action to turn around the company. As a first step, he might consider bringing in some _____(8)_____ to help him run the company.

ANSWERS TO LESSON 7, p. 191



I recommend we bite the bullet and move our operations to China.

Lesson 8

DISCUSSING A DIFFICULT DECISION

Anna, Lynn, and Jeff are thinking about moving their manufacturing facilities from the United States to China. Jeff is having trouble deciding what to do.

Anna: We need to decide already whether or not we want to move our manufacturing from the United States to China. Jeff, have you made the final decision?

Jeff: There are *pros and cons* to moving it to China. I've been **back and forth on this issue** for months. I'm **of two minds**.

Anna: Jeff, I know this is a **tough call**, but now is not the time to be **wishy-washy**. We need to make a decision.

Lynn: That's right, and I recommend we **bite the bullet** and move our operations to China.

Anna: Or we could **test the waters** by moving 25% of our operations there.

Lynn: Good idea. That would give us **the best of both worlds**: we could reduce our risk, while starting to enjoy some of the cost savings from lower-cost manufacturing.

Jeff: I agree with you that we should **put a stake in the ground**. Let's move a quarter of our operations to China.

Lynn: **Good call**, Jeff!

Jeff: I hope I don't live to regret this decision.

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 8

back and forth on an issue
repeatedly changing one's mind about something; having trouble settling on an opinion or decision

EXAMPLE: Should we change our company health care plan? I can't make up my mind. I go **back and forth on the issue.**

of two minds
conflicted; having conflicting ideas about something

EXAMPLE: Many consumers are **of two minds** about buying organic produce. On the one hand, it is often more expensive than regular produce. On the other hand, it may be healthier.

tough call
a difficult decision; something difficult to predict

EXAMPLE: It was a **tough call**, but the company decided to close down its operations in Mexico.

wishy-washy
ineffective; lacking will-power; indecisive; incapable of making clear decisions

EXAMPLE: Wendy is very **wishy-washy**. She changed her mind a hundred times about which packaging design to use for the new product.

(to) bite the bullet
to make a difficult or painful decision; to take a difficult step

EXAMPLE: When demand was down, U.S. automakers had to **bite the bullet** and cut jobs.

ORIGIN: This idiom comes from the military. During the Civil War in the United States, doctors sometimes ran out of whiskey for killing the pain. A bullet would be put in the wounded soldier's mouth during surgery. He would "bite the bullet" to distract him from the pain and

(to) test the waters
to try something out before committing to it; to see what the response or outcome will be to an intended action

EXAMPLE: Before quitting his job as a lawyer to become a chef, Chad **tested the waters** by working weekends at a restaurant.

the best of both worlds
a situation or product that offers two very different advantages at the same time

EXAMPLE: BMW's new sports car offers **the best of both worlds**: a reliable car that's also fun to drive.

(to) put a stake in the ground
to take the first step; to make a big move to get something started; to make a commitment

EXAMPLE: Our business in California has grown steadily over the past two years. Now is the time to **put a stake in the ground** and open a regional office there.

good call
good decision

EXAMPLE: **Good call** on buying Google stock. It has gone way up since you bought it.

(to) live to regret a decision
to feel bad later about one's decision

EXAMPLE: The mayor agreed to allow a new dump to be built in town, but he later **lived to regret his decision.**

my gut tells me
I have a strong feeling that; my intuition tells me

EXAMPLE: It's true that I don't know him well, but **my gut tells me** that Joe is the right person for the sales director position.

NOTE: The "gut" is both the intestines and stomach and also the

Practice the Idioms

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

1) Sandra **is of two minds about** leaving her job to get an MBA.
   a) is upset about
   b) isn't sure about
   c) is very positive about

2) You decided to invest some money in real estate? **Good call!**
   a) You're a good person!
   b) I'll call you back!
   c) Good idea!

3) Ford Motor Company debated for a long time whether or not to start making cars in Russia, but the company finally decided to **bite the bullet**.
   a) drop the project
   b) go ahead with it
   c) enter the weapons business

4) I know you're nervous about the launch of our new robotic vacuum cleaner, but **my gut tells me** it's going to be a big seller.
   a) I have a strong feeling that
   b) my friend tells me that
   c) I don't think that

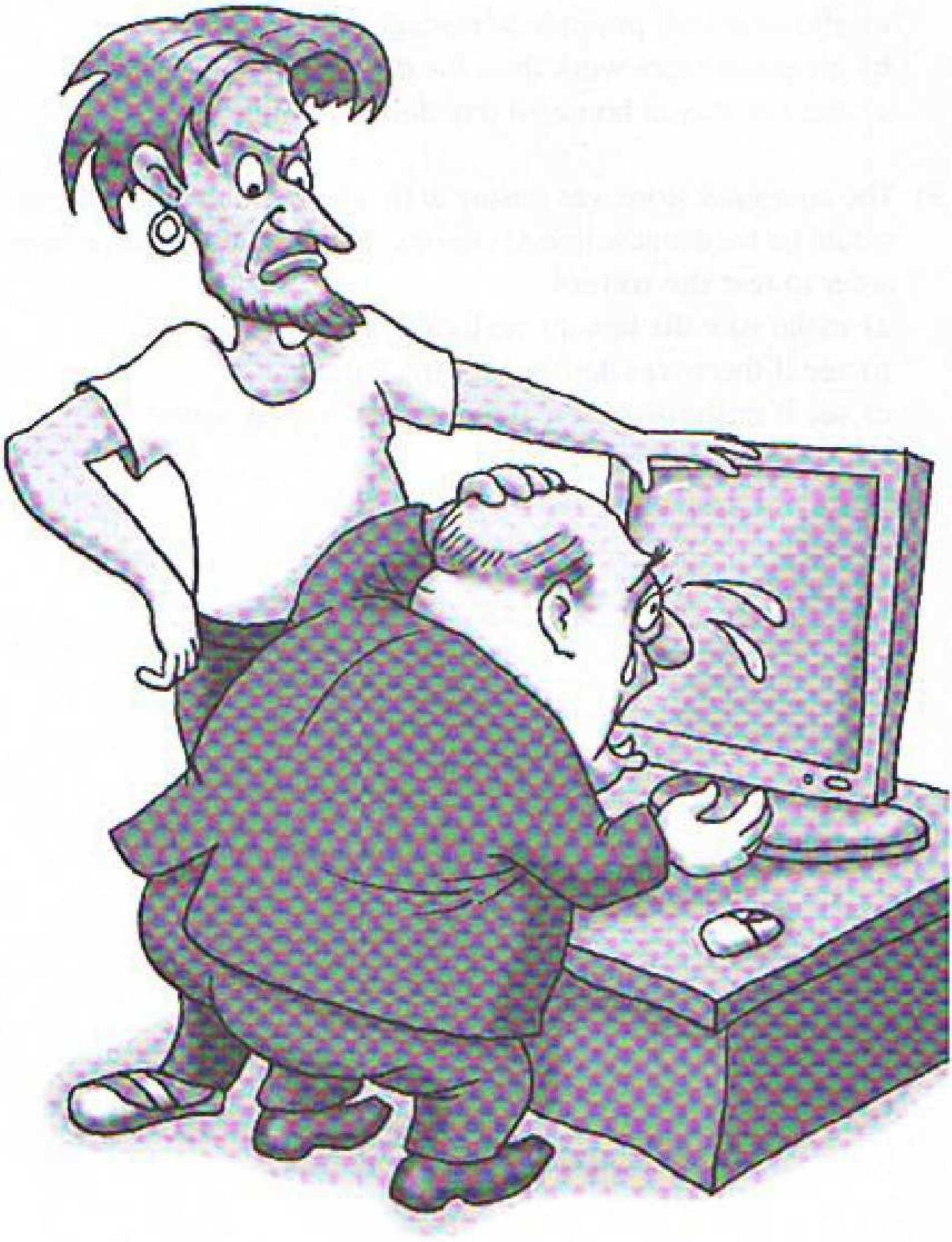
5) Janet left her old job before finding a new one and **lived to regret her decision.**
   a) had trouble finding a new job
   b) was happy with her decision
   c) was sorry about it later

6) Unfortunately, our company president is not a great leader. He's **wishy-washy**.
   a) inconsiderate
   b) not good at making decisions

7) Kate says running a business from her home **gives her the best of both worlds**: she can stay at home with her four young children and still make some money.
   a) allows her all possible advantages
   b) gives her more work than she can handle
   c) lets her stay at home all day doing nothing

8) The computer store was unsure at first how much demand there would be for the new line of laptops, so they started with a small order to **test the waters**.
   a) make sure the laptops really worked
   b) see if there was demand for the laptops
   c) see if customers were interested in buying water

ANSWERS TO LESSON 8, p. 191



This website is a far cry from what we were expecting.

Lesson 9

DEALING WITH A DISSATISFIED CUSTOMER

John hired Kevin's web design firm to design a website for his company, but John is not satisfied with the end result.

John: We're disappointed with the website you designed for us. It's **a far cry from** what we were expecting.

Kevin: I'm sorry you're not satisfied. We really **went all out** to make it a great site.

John: Well, I'm not going to **mince words**, but you charged us a **pretty penny** and you didn't **deliver**.

Kevin: Wow, I'm really surprised to hear you say that! We **pulled out all the stops.**

John: Don't try to **pull the wool over my eyes**. You promised that your best people would work on this project, but our website looks like it was designed by a *summer intern!*

Kevin: What exactly is the problem with the site?

John: **Where to begin?** The *shopping cart* doesn't even work.

Kevin: Really? Well, we'll **get right on that.**

John: And you guys **messed around** forever getting the site done. You were three months behind schedule!

Kevin: I'm sorry about that. We were **swamped**. Let me **make it**

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 9

a far cry from
different than; not at all like; much less than

EXAMPLE: Cisco Systems' stock may be trading higher, but it's still **a far cry from** where it was in 2000.

(to) go all out
to make a big effort; to try hard

EXAMPLE: The small gift shop **went all out** on advertising in December, trying to increase its holiday sales.

(to) mince words
to control one's language so as to be polite

EXAMPLE: Sue told you your new product idea was "the stupidest idea she's ever heard?" Clearly she's not one to **mince words**!

NOTE: Mince has two main meanings: in this expression, it means "to make less harsh." It also means "to chop foods into tiny pieces."

pretty penny
a lot of money; too much money (when referring to the cost of something)

EXAMPLE: Lisa made a **pretty penny** selling antiques on eBay.

(to) deliver
to meet expectations or requirements of a task, project, or job

EXAMPLE: You made a lot of promises during your job interview here. Now that you're hired, I hope you can **deliver**!

(to) pull out all the stops
to use all one's resources to get something done; to try very hard

EXAMPLE: Many airline companies are **pulling out all the stops** to win the right to fly direct to China.

ORIGIN: This expression comes from the world of music. To increase the volume of a pipe organ, organists pull out stops (levers that control

(to) pull the wool over one's eyes
to deceive someone

EXAMPLE: Are you telling me the truth or are you trying to **pull the wool over my eyes**?

ORIGIN: In in the 17th and 18th centuries, men sometimes wore wigs. The "wool" refers to the wig (made of wool). Pulling the wool over the eyes made it impossible to see.

Where to begin?
There is so much to say, I have to think about where to start (usually used when you're about to complain and you want to stress that there's a lot to complain about).

EXAMPLE: Your new marketing campaign has so many problems. **Where to begin?**

(to) get right on something
to take care of something immediately

EXAMPLE: You need my help in finding a new office to lease? I'll **get right on that**.

(to) mess around
to waste time; to spend time with no particular purpose or goal

EXAMPLE: We don't have time to **mess around** with the design for the packaging. Let's just design it quickly and get it into production!

(to be) swamped
to have too much work to do; to be extremely busy

EXAMPLE: Accounting firms are **swamped** during tax season.

(to) make it up to you
to do something to compensate you for your trouble

EXAMPLE: I'm sorry that you weren't happy with the sign we made for your business. Let me **make it up to you** and make a new sign for you at no charge.

Practice the Idioms

Fill in the blanks, using the following idioms:

mince words
pull the wool over my eyes
make it up to you
a far cry from
pretty penny
pulled out all the stops
deliver
Where to begin

Linda: We're never going to use Donna's Delights Catering again! You promised you'd do a great job with our holiday party, but you didn't ____(1)____.

Donna: Oh, really? What exactly was the problem?

Linda: ____(2)____? There were so many problems! First of all, the main course was ____(3)____ what we expected. I'm not going to ____(4)____. The steak you served us tasted like rubber!

Donna: I'm really surprised. I put my best chef on this project, and we bought the best steak available. We ____(5)____.

Linda: I have a feeling you're trying to ____(6)____. I know my steak, and I know the steak you served was low quality.

Donna: Well, I guess it's possible we ordered the wrong meat.

Linda: You charged us a ____(7)____ for your services, and you did a lousy job. We won't be using your company anymore.

Donna: I'm sorry. Let me ____(8)____. We'll bring free lunch for your entire office next Friday.

Lesson 10

DISCUSSING A DIFFICULT REQUEST

Tanya is a head of R&D in a laboratory for Sudsco, a company that makes shampoo. Here she meets with colleagues John and Andy to discuss a request from the marketing department.

Tanya: Let me **kick off** this meeting with some news. Our marketing department would like us to produce a new fragrance by the end of next month.

John: Oh, brother.* We **need this extra work like a hole in the head**! What fragrance are they looking for?

Tanya: Mango.

Andy: Mango? Are they out of their minds? Do they know how *tough* that is?

Tanya: Yeah, but I told them we'd **take a crack at it**. If we **put our minds to it**, I know we can do it.

Andy: I don't know. It's not going to be easy.

Tanya: Let's **roll up our sleeves** and **give it our best shot. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.**

John: Well, Tanya, you certainly have a **can-do attitude!**

Tanya: Actually, this is **child's play** compared to what our CEO wants us to do by the end of the year. He wants us to come up

Andy: What? How are we supposed to manage that? Sometimes I think the **bigwigs** at this company are **out of touch with reality**!

* oh, brother – a polite way of expressing annoyance

IDIOMS & EXPRESSIONS - LESSON 10

(to) kick off
to start something, such as a meeting or a project

EXAMPLE: Bill Gates **kicked off** the conference by showing a demonstration of Microsoft's new search engine.

NOTE: You will also see the phrase "kick-off meeting," meaning the first meeting to get a new project started.

(to) need something like a hole in the head
to have no need for something; to have no desire for something

EXAMPLE: One of our competitors is threatening to take us to court. We **need that like a hole in the head!**

out of one's mind
crazy; having unrealistic thoughts or ideas

EXAMPLE: Our DSL provider is telling us that our rates will go up by 50% starting next month. Are they **out of their minds**?

(to) take a crack at something
to try something

EXAMPLE: It's going to be hard for us to lower our raw materials cost on this product, but we'll **take a crack at it**.

SYNONYM: to have a go at something

(to) put one's mind to something
to focus on a task; to try hard to do something

EXAMPLE: Your accounting course may be difficult, but if you

(to) roll up one's sleeves
to get ready to start something; to prepare to do something

EXAMPLE: We've got to pack up 500 crystal vases by tomorrow morning, so let's **roll up our sleeves** and get to work.

(to) give it one's best shot
to make one's best effort to get something done; to try to do something, even though you're not sure if you'll be successful

EXAMPLE: The small brewery went out of business after three unprofitable years, but at least they **gave it their best shot.**

nothing ventured, nothing gained
If you don't try to do something, you'll never succeed.

EXAMPLE: It's risky to spend so much money developing a new brand, but **nothing ventured, nothing gained**.

can-do attitude
a positive way of looking at things; an optimistic perspective; a positive attitude

EXAMPLE: Marie always says that nothing's impossible. She's got a real **can-do attitude**.

child's play
an easy task

EXAMPLE: Evan has been an auto mechanic for 20 years, so replacing your windshield wipers will be **child's play** for him.

bigwig
very important person; person in charge

EXAMPLE: All the **bigwigs** from the company went to Hawaii for a four-day conference.

SYNONYMS: head honcho; big cheese; VIP (very important person)

ORIGIN: This term comes from "big wig" — the large wigs that English men wore in the 17th and 18th centuries. Men of great importance

out of touch with reality
unrealistic; not aware of what's really going on

EXAMPLE: The CEO believes his company's stock price will triple in a year. Most people think he's **out of touch with reality.**

✍ PRACTICE THE IDIOMS

Choose the best substitute for the phrase or sentence in bold:

1) Our president gave everybody business card holders for Christmas. **I need another business card holder like a hole in the head.**
   a) I really need a new business card holder.
   b) I'm happy to get another business card holder.
   c) I really don't need another business card holder.

2) Installing that new computer software was **child's play** for Mark. He's got a PhD in computer science.
   a) very easy
   b) challenging
   c) enjoyable

3) I agree with you that we may not be successful entering the market in China, but **nothing ventured, nothing gained.**
   a) we should take a risk and enter the Chinese market
   b) we shouldn't enter the Chinese market
   c) if we enter the Chinese market, we'll definitely succeed

4) If you can't figure out how to fix the jammed printer, let Adam **take a crack at it.**
   a) fix the crack in it
   b) try to fix it
   c) throw it in the trash

5) The company **kicked off** the new fiscal year by announcing several exciting new products.
   a) ended
   b) postponed
   c) began

6) It won't be easy, but if you **put your mind to it**, you can study for your law degree while also working full-time.
   a) don't think too much about it
   b) work hard at it
   c) think about it

7) Sorry I couldn't get you the financial reports by Friday. I **gave it my best shot**, but I just couldn't finish on time.
   a) tried as hard as I could
   b) made a little effort
   c) didn't try too hard

8) If you want to work for IBM, call my cousin Alan. He's a **big-wig** there.
   a) low-level employee
   b) frequent visitor
   c) senior executive

ANSWERS TO LESSON 10, p. 191

REVIEW FOR LESSONS 6-10

Fill in the blank with the missing word:

1) We're not happy with our accounting firm. All of the mistakes they made with our taxes cost us a pretty _____.

   a) nickel b) penny c) dollar

2) If the pharmaceutical company's new product is not approved by the Food and Drug Administration, they're going to be _____ deep trouble.

   a) with b) on c) in

3) Sales will probably be slow after the holidays. Let's think of a way to _____ up some business.

   a) beat b) break c) drum

4) Olivia is _____ two minds about quitting her job and starting her own business. On the one hand, it will be more exciting. On the other hand, she's afraid of taking a risk.

   a) of b) with c) at

5) In the months following Google's initial public offering, the stock price went _____ the roof.

   a) up b) out c) through

6) Your business has grown too large to run out of your home. You're going to need to _____ the bullet and rent some office space.

   a) eat b) bite c) take

7) Our CEO kicked _____ the company holiday party by warning people not to drink too much champagne.

8) If you want to bring some _____ blood into the company, put an advertisement on Monster.com or another online job search site.

a) red b) smart c) new

9) Jerry doesn't understand what's going on in the marketplace today. He's _____ touch with reality.

a) out of b) close to c) far from

10) Don't mince _____. Tell Heather what you *really* think about her performance.

a) words b) language c) talk

11) Irene wasn't sure she'd be able to prepare the financial reports by tomorrow's meeting, but she promised to _____ a crack at it.

a) make b) take c) do

12) Ben pulled out all the _____ to ensure that his business partner from Chile enjoyed his visit to the United States.

a) starts b) stops c) tricks

13) We've got a lot of employees just sitting around and playing Solitaire on their computers all day. It's time to _____ house.

a) wash b) clean c) empty

14) If we don't roll _____ our sleeves and get started on this project, we're going to miss our deadline.

a) down b) out c) up

15) Apple is a very innovative company. They're always dreaming _____ interesting new products.

a) about b) up c) down

ANSWERS TO REVIEW p. 192